

Problems of Peace and After-Peace

Nicholas Murray Butler

An Address delivered at the Lincoln Day Banquet
under the auspices of the Republican County
Committee of Passaic County, New Jersey
Paterson, N. J., February 11, 1919

Problems of Peace and After-Peace

By Nicholas Murray Butler

AFTER expressing his high appreciation of the compliment paid him by the Republicans of Passaic County, in inviting him to speak in the city where he had grown up and first taken active part in politics, Mr. Butler gave some personal reminiscences of the political leaders and political controversies of the years between 1883 and 1892 when he himself was very active in the Republican Organization of Passaic County. Mr. Butler continued:

It is fitting that Republicans throughout the nation should mark their loyal celebration of the anniversary of Lincoln's birth by invoking his spirit, his statesmanship, and his lofty patriotism, to guide the Republican Party in its relation toward the grave questions, both national and international, that are pressing for answer. The duty and the opportunity of the Republican Party are of supreme importance, and the party is called upon again, as it was in 1860 and in 1896, to bend all its energies and to unite all its abilities in solving problems which involve the very fabric and honor of the Government. It must not be forgotten that the Congressional elections of 1918 indicated with clear emphasis that a large plurality of American voters place their confidence and their hope in the policies and in the leadership of the Republican Party. Indeed, a change of but a few hundred votes in an electorate of more than one million in the State of California at the presidential election of 1916 would have put a Republican instead of a Democrat in the White House during these momentous years; and a change of

some eight hundred votes in not more than nine congressional districts at the same election, would have enabled the Republicans to organize the House of Representatives and to elect the Speaker.

Despite these facts, the President of the United States, in his capacity as a party leader, was rash enough in October last to demand of the American people a vote of confidence in his administration. He drew a dismal picture of what would happen to him and his influence if his demand were refused. In reply, the Administration received a vote of lack of confidence, which, all things considered, is more emphatic than any similar vote since the Republican Party lost control of the House of Representatives in 1874, immediately after having re-elected General Grant to the Presidency by an overwhelming majority in 1872.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that when the elections of 1918 were held, the Democrat Administration had all the benefit of participation in a successful war; that it had been disbursing public moneys by the billion, with an extravagant recklessness that was without parallel in the history of any government; that it controlled, through the railways, the telegraphs and telephones, as well as through the supervision of the banking and business interests of the country, an amount of patronage which made the list of office-holders of ten years ago sink into insignificance. Despite all these sources of political aid and strength, a Republican minority in the House of Representatives was turned into a majority of forty-four. Passaic County, a veritable capital of American industry, spoke with no uncertain sound; so did Maine; so did West Virginia; so did Indiana; so did Missouri; so did Kansas; and so did Washington. Indeed, in some of the western States that were carried for Democrat electors in 1916, it would have been only courteous on the part of the Democrat Organizations to move to make the vote

for the Republican candidates unanimous. The hand-writing is on the wall. The next President of the United States will be a Republican, and he will have behind him a united Republican Party, eager to solve the new questions in a spirit of justice and of human sympathy, and determined to protect the foundations of the American republic against all enemies, whether they be the Central Powers and their allies without, or the Anarchists, Bolsheviks, and enemies of liberty and social order within.

THE DEMAND FOR LEADERSHIP

The American people are tired of politics given over to rhetoric and to phrase-making, to carrying water on both shoulders, to stooping with ear to the ground and trying to avoid taking a definite and specific position on the issues raised by the revolutionists who are busy among us. The American people, and particularly the young Americans, both men and women, where women are already exercising the suffrage, are crying out for leadership, for courage, for vision and for capacity to lead the thought of the nation, as well as to formulate its public action. Plain speaking and not fine words are what the people demand; definite policies and not platitudes are what they wish to have presented for their judgment.

Just see what the situation now is: The war has been triumphantly won by the courage, the endurance and the high purpose of the people and the armies of France, of Great Britain, of Belgium, and of Italy, with the powerful aid of the financial and economic resources, and of the splendid fighting forces of the United States. The decisive part played in the final stage of the war by the fighting forces of America on land and on sea, was directly due to the resourcefulness, the capacity, the intelligence and the patriotism of the American people, and was, in spite of the short-comings, the extravagance, the quarrels, and the incapacity of many of those who were in con-

spicuous posts of official power and responsibility. The war is won, and as a result, the people of the United States are bound to the splendid peoples who have been their allies by new ties of respect and affection, which no selfish interests and no enemy propaganda must ever be allowed to weaken, much less to break. The result of the war is a new world—new in many of its interests; new in many of its problems; new in many of its opportunities. What is to be the place of America in this new world, and how shall the Republican Party do its full duty to the country which it was born to protect and to serve?

THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

The answer is, after all, comparatively simple. America is ready to take her just place as a member of a society of like-minded and cooperating nations, to all of which she is bound, not only by the ties knit by the events of the war, but by strong personal and family bonds growing out of the fact that our twentieth century population has been drawn from nearly every country in the world. The position of America should be that of brother and friend, not that of guardian or attempted ruler. We shall have quite enough to do in minding our own business and in taking care of the interests of our own immense population, and our own complex system of trade and of industry, without assuming any part of the duty of minding other peoples' business.

The Republican Party is certain to insist that the new organization of the world shall be a society of nations, and not a society without nations. It will strive constantly to strengthen and to protect the integrity and the freedom of action of America in order that America, tied down by no vain and empty formulas, may have more to give in service to other peoples and in cooperation with them. The Republican Party will insist that the fruits of the war be not lost or traded away; that insidious German

propaganda be not listened to; and that the manifest attempts to create discord between America on the one hand, and France, Great Britain, and Italy, as well as with the new nations of the Czechoslovaks and the Poles, on the other, shall not be permitted to succeed. We do not propose that a war which has been won by arms shall be lost by words. We do not propose that the sufferings and sorrows of France, Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, and Serbia, or those of tens of thousands of our own American families, shall be left without the full results of victory in establishing and maintaining peace and good order in the world.

There is grave disappointment among Republicans that the American delegation to the Peace Conference was not made more representative of the international knowledge, the international experience, and the international statesmanship of our country. There is grave disappointment, too, that the terms of peace with the Central Powers were not quickly and speedily arrived at, announced and enforced, as they might easily have been, in accordance with the convincing formula uttered by the statesmen of France early in the war, namely: Reparation, Restitution, Security. Had this course been pursued, the Central Powers and their allies would have known by this time exactly where they stood, and the splendid unity and concord of the Allies, as these existed on November 11 last, would have been preserved without the present discussion of the myriad details of a new-world order, that are quite irrelevant to the making of peace, and as to which sufficient time for a complete understanding and agreement should and can be had. The great need of this moment is to establish peace, not only in form but in fact; to enable business, industry, and agriculture to resume their normal course; to restore the broken lines of trade and commerce, both at home and abroad; to give men and women assurance in their employment and in the conduct

of their business; and then, with normal life resumed, to take up during as many months as may be needed, the study of questions of world organization. It is my belief this is and has been the substantially unanimous view of the most competent and experienced statesmen in every one of the Allied countries, and in the United States; but a contrary course has been followed and its results are already seen to be unhappy. We are wholly in the dark as to what is really being said and done in Paris. The fulsome adulation and flattery of the newspaper dispatches, so repugnant to right-thinking Americans, reveal little and conceal much. These dispatches contradict each other, not only on successive days, but on the same day, and no one in America, despite the loud protestations of open diplomacy, has any clear or accurate idea of what the American delegation is pressing upon the Peace Conference or how it is being received. What we do know is that while peace waits, the splendid unity and spirit of the Allies are being destroyed by irrelevant and largely mysterious debates.

THE DUTY OF SPEAKING PLAINLY

The spokesmen of the Republican Party, both in and out of Congress, have met this deplorable and unhappy situation with high patriotism, and with almost super-human patience. They have held that since our country is engaged in a great international discussion, we must do everything in our power to support our official representatives, even though we do not know what they are doing, but suspect they are doing many things which we cannot approve. An occasional speech has been delivered on the floor of the Senate or the House by way of warning to the people that sooner or later the spokesmen of the Republican Party will deem it their duty to speak out and to tell the truth as they see it. We cannot, however, afford to shirk our responsibility for the protection and defense

of American independence and American institutions, and we must not, through silence, allow sinister influences that are antagonistic to American principles, and that will in time alter or overthrow our Government, to enter unchallenged into our life.

Two events have taken place in quick succession, which call for frank and clear speech. Just as the autocratic and criminal government of the Bolsheviks in Russia seemed to be tottering to its fall, its leaders, with their hands still dripping with the blood of their victims, were actually invited to confer with representatives of free and liberty-loving peoples. This step is in effect that "entering into a compact with crime" which the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Pichon, only a few weeks ago said should not be done. From a moral as well as from a political point of view, this action, no matter what its excuse, deserves only most vigorous denunciation. If, as has been suggested, it is the price paid for relieving from a dangerous position the tiny military forces landed on the north coast of Russia, then it deserves something worse; for neither American nor British soldiers would ever ask for compromise with criminals as a substitute for their own courage and their own noble patriotism.

The worst criminals produced by the war are the Russian Bolsheviks. Even the horrors perpetrated by the Austrians in Serbia, and the outrages committed by the Germans in Belgium, seem mere exhibitions of temper when compared with the systematic cruelty and crime practised by the Bolshevik régime against everything in Russia that represented law, order and liberty, or that was capable of building upon the ruins left by the overthrow of the Romanoff dynasty. To desert the people of Russia now is an act of astounding folly and ingratitude. To strain at gnats like Huerta and William of Hohenzollern, and to swallow camels like Lenine and Trotsky, is certainly a curious proceeding. If one were seeking for ways to aid

our enemies to re-establish their strength and their menace, his first step would be to leave the Russian people to their tender mercies.

Formal conference with the Bolsheviks was bad enough, and we may well contrast with this action the message which the stout-hearted and fearless Mayor of Seattle sent a few days ago to American Bolsheviks who were organizing war on the peace and order of that splendid city. His upholding of law and order is the short and easy way to deal with Bolsheviks. But once a conference had been determined upon, surely there could have been found among the hundred millions of Americans some man or woman of honor, of untarnished reputation, and with a record for public service who could have borne the credentials of the Government of the United States without soiling or discrediting them. The appointment actually made has affronted our decent citizenship and aggrieved the moral and religious sentiment of the country. No one, however blinded by partisanship, has been found to rise in defense of this act. It is truly an astonishing performance.

We saw one journalistic adulator sent, without official commission but with high authority, to muddle our affairs with Mexico, and we saw him later turn up among the most active friends and agents of our Teuton enemies. We were told in explanation that, although without previous training or public experience, he had received this important commission as a reward for having written in flattering terms of the President and his policies. It appears that this new appointee also has busied himself with his pen, and that apparently just because he has published a crude and fulsome eulogy of the President's personality and public conduct, he has been selected to represent the people of the United States. Not a fraction of one per cent. of those who know his record would be willing to take his hand, and yet he is to represent America

at a conference on the vitally important question of the future of the Russian people and their relation to the rest of the world.

We have become accustomed during these past six years to the President's fondness for surrounding himself with intellectual and political midgets, but we have hitherto been spared anything so shocking as this appointment. What are the clergy going to say about it? What are the women of the country, now granted the vote in many states, going to say about it? What are high-minded patriots and jealous lovers of our country's honor, regardless of section or of party, going to say about it? I for one do not believe that true patriotism and decent feeling are dead in the land.

PROBLEMS AT HOME

While our eyes are turned to the Peace Conference and our minds are filled with international problems, we are drifting at home, without executive or legislative leadership, in waters filled with rocks and floating mines. These rocks and floating mines are the domestic problems which become every day more insistent, and whose solution we must not postpone one instant longer than is absolutely necessary. What is needed is more action and less talk. The Constitution of the United States, by far the most important single political document of modern times, was completely drafted between May 25 and September 17. There is no reason, save mental and political laziness and inertia, for dragging out over five years a solution of the railway problem, or for allowing the industrial situation to continue to develop domestic wars which are already disastrous, and might easily become comparable in their effects with the international war through which we have just passed.

In order to deal with these problems in an American spirit and in the interest of all America, we must get

back quickly to our American form of government. Under pressure of the necessities of war we turned our Government, for the time being, into an autocracy and a bureaucracy which Russia of the Tsars might well have envied. There was manifold interference with individual liberty, with civil rights, with trade and commerce, and with all other normal activities of a free people. Congress became a rubber stamp, and public discussion of public policies practically disappeared. As war measures, all these were defensible. We had to help to win the war, to win it quickly, and to win it completely. This has been done and we have now to return our Government to its proper functions and to restore freedom to the individual and to business.

Of course, there are those who believe in transforming our American republic into a socialistic democracy, and they would be glad to continue permanently the autocratic and bureaucratic system which the war developed; and it must not be forgotten that socialism is the twin brother of autocracy, and that like autocracy it is the deadly enemy of republicanism and of individual liberty.

The people are now everywhere asking questions of business and of the relation of government to business; questions of finance and of financial provision for an expanding foreign trade; questions of labor and of the workingman's ambition to have his full share of the rewards and the satisfactions of American life; questions of agricultural development and of the utilization of the nation's resources; and, above all, questions of the administration and control of the nation's great systems of transportation and communication. All these cry aloud for answer and the Democrat administration has no answer to give. So long as these questions are unanswered, and so long as there is wide-spread anxiety and uncertainty as to future policies, just so long we offer invitation to the activities of those desperate revolutionaries who would destroy liberty

and order to set up a new tyranny of the mob, who would overthrow equality of citizenship in order to establish a privileged ruling class, and who would declare war on American institutions in the name of that mad and murderous Bolshevism which is just now reducing the people of Russia to impotence and slavery. The way of escape from all this is to press forward quickly to the solution of our domestic problems with wisdom, with human sympathy, with courage, and with constructive power.

THE LABOR PROBLEM

The greatest and most far-reaching of these problems is that of labor. Here very great progress had been made until the I. W. W. movement and Bolshevism appeared in America. The hours of work in essential industries were no longer excessive and were being steadily shortened; wages had risen greatly, both in money value and in purchasing power; conditions attaching to hand work had been improved in healthfulness and in attractiveness; collective bargaining was well established over an increasing area, both of territory and of industry. The path of progress lies not in returning to a state of industrial war, but rather in applying to industrial conflicts precisely the same principles of justice, of understanding and of sympathy, by which we hope hereafter to avoid international conflicts.

The labor problem, so-called, is not, I think, primarily a question of wages or of hours of work; it is primarily a human problem. Just so soon as we recognize that wages are paid, not out of savings, or capital, but out of products, and that the greater the product the more there will be available for wages, we shall have begun to get on the right track. The next step is to realize that product is the result of cooperation, not of Capital and Labor, considered as dead, abstract things whose names are spelled with large letters, but of the cooperation of three elements,

all of which are human: the man who works with his hands, the man who works with his head, and the man who works with his savings. In each case the essential thing is not the hands, the head, or the savings; the essential thing is the man.

Let us establish cooperation and conference between these three types of producers, not alone when difficulties and disputes have arisen or are about to arise, but as a steady policy in the daily conduct of the particular business. By taking counsel together as a means of prevention, these three types of men will come, after a while, to need very little counsel together as a means of cure. Action such as this is sometimes called industrial democracy. That is not a very happy or a very exact term, but if it assists in making clear what I have in mind then I am willing to use it. If we can deal satisfactorily with the labor question, the next few years will be years of the greatest prosperity in the industrial history of the American people.

THE TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM

The reason why the Government was obliged to take over and to operate the railways of the country as a war measure was because our uncertain and unwise policies of the last thirty years had put the railways in a position where they could not themselves cooperate as the Government wished without violating the law. The first thing that the Government railway administration did was to set all restrictive laws aside and to operate the railways with a view to meeting the necessities of the moment. This fact alone conclusively demonstrates to every thoughtful man the unwisdom of our policy or policies toward the railways during the past generation. We had injured or ruined their credit so that they could not get money for additional terminals, for needed rolling stock, or for improvements that were imperatively demanded. We had prevented them from combining to divide the business of

a given territory to the best advantage, and we had put them under forty-nine different sets of masters—namely, an Interstate Commerce Commission and forty-eight separate state commissions or systems of railway control. It is important to remember that we ourselves had done these things and not the railways. There had been very grave abuses in the organization and conduct of the railway systems years ago, and just resentment at these abuses had played a large part in bringing about the situation which existed in 1917. Perhaps now we have learned our lesson and are ready to deal with the transportation systems of the country as an important national asset to be preserved and developed for national service. There is no good reason why we should take either five years or two years to work out and adopt a sound policy toward the railways.

The ruling principles are simple, and may perhaps be stated in this way:

1. Government ownership and operation of railways have been ineffective and unfortunate in Europe, and while compatible with an autocratic or a socialistic state are incompatible with a republic unless that republic is to drift either toward autocracy or toward socialistic democracy. To establish government ownership and operation of railways would be to take a long step toward changing our American form of government.

2. Private ownership and operation of railways, despite abuses, particularly in the early days, have contributed enormously to the development of the United States. They have offered unexampled opportunities for initiative and organizing skill. They had developed a transportation system which was without an equal in the world for cheapness, comfort, speed, and public service.

3. Under government ownership and operation of railways all officials and employees of the railway systems would become part of a great ruling bureaucracy. They would lose their sense of initiative and independence, and they as well as

passengers and shippers would be deprived of any disinterested government tribunal to which to appeal for redress of grievances.

4. The experience of government railway administration during the war has clearly demonstrated the futility of attempting to continue to apply the provisions of the Sherman Act to transportation systems: combination, cooperation, and the pooling of business are an absolute necessity if the railways are to continue to serve the public successfully. Such combination, cooperation, and pooling can, however, only be permitted under government supervision and control.

5. While private ownership and operation of railways are not only advantageous but probably necessary to the continuance of the American system of government, the railways themselves are not private undertakings. They are charged with a public interest and are distinctly public service institutions. For this additional reason, and because of experience in this and other countries, government supervision and control are essential.

6. Government supervision and control of railways involve large powers over capital issues, service, rates and wages. This means absolute ruin for the railway systems unless with the supervision and control there goes a just measure of financial responsibility. In other words, the government must cooperate with the railways in making it possible for them to serve the public as the government may either desire or compel. One way to do this is to establish rates at a point which will produce a return sufficient to pay interest on bonded debt and dividends of a fixed minimum amount upon capital stock, providing that earnings in excess of the amount necessary for these purposes shall be applied in equal parts to reward labor, to effect improvements in permanent way and rolling stock, and finally to reward investors.

7. Create a Federal Transportation Board to take the place of the Interstate Commerce Commission with supervision of all transportation whether by land or by water, and provide that membership in the federal transportation system shall carry with it such advantages that no existing railway, and none hereafter organized, could afford to remain outside of it.

Pursue in this respect a policy similar to that which has been successful in building up the Federal Reserve banking system.

8. Remove railways that are members of the federal transportation system from the jurisdiction or control of state commissions, while providing that local and regional interest in and concern for railway systems be fully recognized. Treat all transportation in law, as it is in fact, as part of one great system of national transportation, regardless of whether a particular shipment crosses a state line or not. The Republican National Convention of 1916 emphatically supported this policy.

9. Settlement of the relation to exist between the railways and the government is not a matter for railway managers, owners of securities and government officials alone. It is a matter which interests every citizen not only as a potential passenger or shipper, but as an American concerned in the protection of those fundamental principles upon which the country's liberty, opportunity, and prosperity have been built.

Given these principles, it should not be difficult for a disinterested body of men to prepare in a short time a bill for the exclusive federal supervision of the railway systems of the country. Were it announced that this was to be done, the wheels of industry would begin to revolve and trade to expand without an hour's delay.

THE BUSINESS PROBLEM

The relation of the Federal Government to the country's business ought to be settled upon the basis of the experience of the last thirty years, and by the application of principles similar to those that have been suggested for the treatment of the transportation problem. The attempt to enforce competition by law and to punish cooperation has been a dismal failure, and it was dropped by the Government the moment we entered the war. A constructive policy toward business will provide for the largest amount of initiative and cooperation on the part of individuals and corporations, while assuring the same measure of effective federal supervision and control that

now exists in the case of the banks, and that ought to exist in the case of the railways. We need by the side of the Federal Reserve Board and the Federal Transportation Board, a Federal Trade Board with analogous powers and duties in relation to the producing, manufacturing, and shipping industries of the country.

To be sure, these problems are vast and touch directly the life and interest of every American, and for that reason they are problems which Americans must solve for themselves. How better can they set out to solve them than in the patient, long-suffering, and deeply-patriotic spirit of Abraham Lincoln? He was born 110 years ago into a world which men then thought as troubled and as difficult as we now think ours. The menace of Napoleon hung over Europe and the people of Great Britain had undertaken, with all their resourcefulness, their energy and their determination, the task of his overthrow in order that the newly-established liberties of the people might not be limited or lost. While Lincoln was yet a child on the frontier in Southern Indiana, Napoleon was a prisoner at St. Helena and was no more to trouble Europe or the world. Then, as now, American questions went hand in hand with international questions, and as Lincoln grew up his mind was turned toward matters of domestic government, of the settlement and organization of new territories, of human freedom and human slavery, and finally of the preservation of the Union itself. No man can tell what might have happened to America had Abraham Lincoln not been elected to the Presidency in 1860, but of one thing we may be sure: The history of the world from that day to this would have been strangely different. With that wonderful combination of qualities of heart and head which enabled him to carry the country safely through the crisis of four years of civil war, and which then placed him in the Pantheon of the world's noblest

heroes and servants, he made possible the America which we know and love, the America of almost unlimited power, of lofty purpose, and of stern determination not to let Liberty wither or die in its hands. The question to be settled by the people in 1860 was whether the Union should be preserved or permitted to dissolve. Abraham Lincoln said that it should be preserved at all costs, and that under no circumstances should it be permitted to dissolve. The question to be settled by the people in 1920 will be whether the American nation shall remain upon its foundation of ordered liberty and free opportunity, or whether it shall be so modified, or perhaps even so largely overturned, that there will arise in its stead a social democracy, autocracy's nearest and best friend, to take over the management of each individual's life and business, to order his comings and his goings, to limit his occupations and his savings, and to say that the great experiment of Washington and Hamilton, of Jefferson and Madison, of Marshall and Webster, of Adams and Clay, and of Lincoln and Roosevelt has come to an end, and gone to join the list of failures in free government with the ancient republics of Greece and Rome and their later followers of Venice and Genoa.

Lincoln quoted Scripture to his purpose when he said at Springfield in 1858: "A house divided against itself cannot stand". I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other."

We may almost echo his exact words, and say that a house divided against itself cannot stand, a nation cannot endure half American and half Bolshevik. I do not expect the nation to continue divided, but I do expect that under the leadership and guidance of the Republican Party it will become all American.

